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ENOUGH HAMS TO GO AROUND

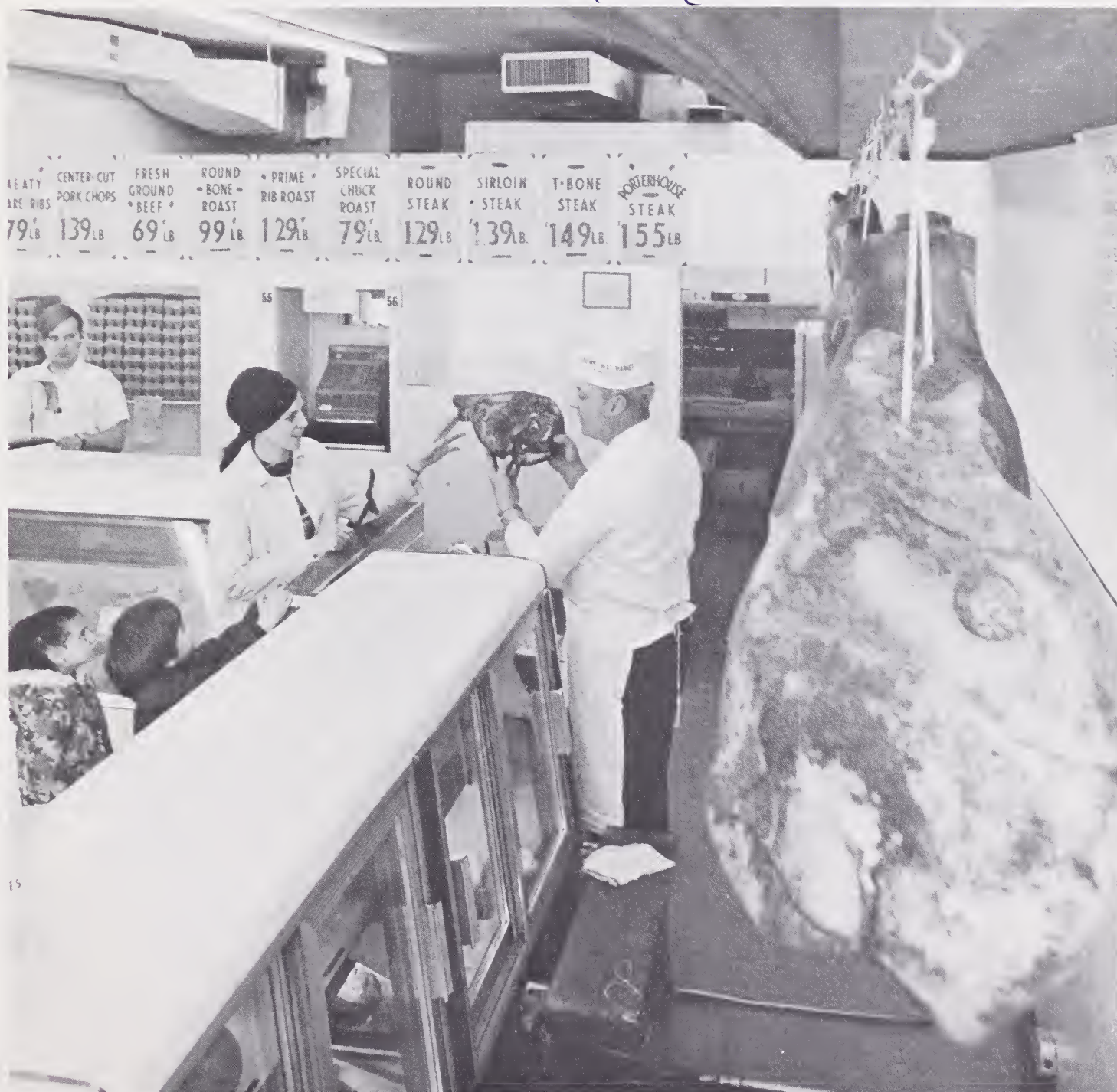
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*Enough HAMS TO GO
Around*



Hams--over 150 million of them--were produced under Federal inspection last year. That total was processed into a variety of products, from country cured and smoked hams, to those prepared in modern smokehouses to fully cooked canned hams. 0372X231-13



The cut of meat called a ham can be taken only from the hind quarter of a hog. If the ham, once trimmed to size (above 0372A236-4) isn't cured or smoked, it should be treated like any other fresh pork product and cooked thoroughly. For safety and best flavor and texture, cook to an internal temperature of at least 170 degrees. Leftovers may be stored for two days in the refrigerator and up to three months in the freezer.

Some hams are cured the country way, as shown at right in Smithfield, Va. These hams are hand rubbed with salt, (0372A234-12) cured in the salt, and then smoked and dried for additional weeks or months (0372A234-29). If a type of wood, such as hickory, is mentioned on the label it must have been used. The experienced hand and eye, unaided by temperature or humidity gauges, know just when these specialty products are ready.



Most hams are cured with a brine solution and smoked in stainless steel smokehouses (below 0372A237-2) where the temperature, humidity, and smoke can be closely monitored (0372A237-18). Smoking and curing make the ham free of harmful trichinae. If a warm serving is desired, an internal temperature of 160 degrees is recommended for best flavor and texture. Leftover cured ham can be stored for three days in the refrigerator or two months in the freezer.

All canned hams have been fully cooked, but they should be refrigerated if directed on the label. Dented, swollen, or leaking cans shouldn't be purchased. The recommended temperature for heating a canned ham is 140 degrees.



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